placed in the coffin, which must always be used for burial. Even if a person is poor, "he can always borrow a plank from a neighbor, for people are charitable in matters of death," or, if a family cannot immediately afford to have carpenters make the coffin, they are paid later, a few gourdes at a time. This also holds for the professional bather of corpses, who receives three to five gourdes in the countryside, fifteen gourdes in Mirebalais, and, it is said, perhaps fifty in Port-au-Prince. A pig or a goat is killed to feed those who dig the grave and carry the coffin, "so they can do their work well." Otherwise these men receive no payment, for "people do such things for each other."

The wake,[9] which takes place on the night of death, is one of the most important ceremonies in the cycle of rites for the dead. Wakes are held for all dead, even for very young children if they have been baptized, though if a baby dies before baptism, it is buried without ceremony in a little box in the courtyard of the habitation. During the wake the body lies in the second room of the house, the long white candle used at the deceased's first communion standing lighted at his feet. If the dead was not a communicant, newly bought candles are placed at his head and feet. The wife and children either stay with the corpse or are near by with friends. The one who bathed the corpse remains constantly at its side as the members of the family come and go, since the body must never remain alone. Wailing goes on all night, and as more relatives arrive, those already there echo their cries.

On a table in another room a white cloth is spread, and a crucifix, images of the saints, flowers, lighted candles, and a lamp of oil are placed on it. The singers bring their songbooks, since the canticles of the Church are almost the only songs heard. At times songs are specially composed for the occasion, but these always concern themselves with death. Those who stand before the table, principally women, lead the singing, the others acting as a chorus. People come and go